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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0223

06/09/00

~ HP Entry-level Inkjet! ~ People Are Talking! ~ TAF Flea Market!
~ Wireless Video Games! ~ Outlook Anti-Virus Fix ~ Illustrator 9 Ships
~ Microsoft Isn't Moving ~ Portable PlayStation! ~ Gauntlet Legends
~ New A-ONE Web Site! ~ Lara Croft On GBC! ~ Songbird News!

-* Microsoft Says Plan Flawed *-
-* Judge Orders Microsoft Split In Two *-
-* Philippines Drops Charges In Love Bug Case *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

Ahhh, I just love Fridays! The weekend is upon us and it's just a time to get away from [most of] the stressful parts of life. Remember a few weeks back that I mentioned that I was applying for a newly-created position within my department? Well, I did not get that job. After I was told, I asked one question: Why? I was told that "I like the job you're doing in ____ and I'd like to see that continue." What that comment really meant - and I agree that it was a compliment - was that he didn't want to lose me. Okay. I was really upset about this decision because I knew that it wasn't based on whether or not I was the best qualified person, but what the impact on the department would be if I was given the job. In the back of my mind, I expected this. So, after cooling off, I went back and revisited the problems that I was having with my immediate superior, and requested (to be politically correct) that I and my staff report to someone else (the head of the department). I may have mentioned some of the various problems we've had with my immediate superior. Well, I was told what was expected of me if I were to change reporting structure and the hesitance of that occurring because it wasn't clear that I'd meet those expectations. Hmmm, here I was a few hours earlier being told that what I was accomplishing was appreciated, but now it wasn't clear I was up to it. I was given a "test" - perform a group of projects within three weeks and all would be well. The projects were completed in less than two weeks; and then I went on vacation. How's that for being cocky! But I hadn't had any feedback yet, so yesterday I went to the head of the department and asked him how we fared since I hadn't received a "report card" yet. I got my answer today - we have a new boss. What a great way to start off a Friday!

Back to the real world of computing, it appears that Microsoft is paying for its steamroller business practices. How this break-up will affect Microsoft and the public is unknown. I've read a number of analyses and came away just as confused as before I read them. Time will tell. I agree with the decision, however.

Some things will be changing with regard to A-ONE in the near future. Since Joe Mirando played a role in these changes, I'll let him mention them first in his column, further on in this week's issue. Nothing dramatic, but fun nonetheless.

Meanwhile, I'll finish up here and then start making plans for my weekend full of work around the house, or outside the house. After the torrential downpours we received earlier in the week, I think I'll need to re-seed my "new" lawn. Then I have to prepare for the rest of the lawn work. I still cannot believe I need to order more loam!

Until next time...

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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TAF Flea Market June 21st

Agenda for the Toronto Atari Federation meeting of June 21st, 2000,
7:00 PM:

COME ONE, COME ALL to the first TAF FLEA MARKET of the new millenium!
TAF's famous flea markets have always been a great way for fellow Atari users to find the hardware and software they need to improve the Atari computing experience, or to sell what they don't need anymore. As well, it gives them a chance to associate with fellow Atarians. Sell your old stuff, find yourself a treasure!

This particular Flea Market will also give TAF a chance to sell some pieces of equipment that they don't need anymore to homes where they will get more use. And there's some interesting pieces we've amassed over the years, so you may want to check this out.

As well, the Mario Becroft solutions (VGA adaptor, Mouse Adaptor, QWERTYX, IDE Board) will also be offered for sale. These items are a great way to use modern peripherals with your classic systems.

Admission - FREE
Tables - FREE

Please note - TAF does not support piracy. Anyone selling pirated or stolen goods will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law!

So come on out and have a great time at the TAF Flea Market! We'll see you there!

TORONTO ATARI FEDERATION User Group meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month in the North York Memorial Community Hall on the Lower (or Concourse) Level of the North York City Centre Library at 5110 Yonge Street at Parkhome Avenue. Parking garage inside the complex. Those using public transport can take the TTC's Yonge/University/Spadina line to North York Centre Station. Meetings start 7:00 PM, \$2.00 to non-members. Membership is \$25 CDN a year, and includes a subscription to the TAF newsletter PHOENIX. A membership in TAF IS Atari support!

TAF Home Page: <http://taf.atari.org>

Ken Macdonald, TAF President + Mario Becroft agent: 416-533-0504 or
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Dan Dreibelbis, TAF Vice-President and Sinclap Tamer: 416-766-4743 or
dreibel@idirect.com

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Miranda
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I've always felt strongly (and I know that Dana agrees) that a magazine or newspaper should report the news, not MAKE it.

Well, it's not like we single-handedly split up Microsoft or anything, but we here at A-ONE will be moving to a new cyber-home sometime in the near future. We haven't made any real plans to do anything different yet, but if you've been visiting the copy of A-ONE that Dana maintains, you probably won't notice much of a difference for a while. If you've visited people.delphi.com/a1mag, you've no doubt noticed that it hasn't been updated in quite a while. That will be changing.

With our new "digs", there's also the possibility of adding new features and such. If you have any ideas or opinions, drop us a line and let us know. I can't promise anything... other than that we'll listen, of course.

The new web address (once we get everything up and running) will be <http://a1mag.b-squared.net>

The space is being provided as a favor by a former Atari user and good friend. I'd like to thank our new benefactor, but I'm not exactly sure about how he'd feel about our advertising his name around.

And before you ask, no, it's not Ralph.

At any rate, we'll be trying to set things up slowly, but you can access the new site right now and, if things aren't up and running yet, you'll be automatically redirected to the old site.

I'd also like to mention that the CURRENT site has been maintained solely by Dana. I've had much less time than I had anticipated and something had to go. That's why the A1MAG site on Delphi has fallen into disuse. I'm hoping that, since we're starting with a brand new site, I'll be able to keep on top of things.

And of interest to no one but myself, I just turned forty this past week. It's funny, but I always thought I'd be more "grown up" by this time. I'm at the age now that my father was when I first thought of him as old. I don't feel old. Not intellectually or emotionally, anyway. Physically? Well, that changes from day to day. As someone once said, "If I had known I was going to be around this long, I'd have taken better care of myself."

Well, let's get on with the news and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Guillaume Le Tetu asks:

"I have an Atari 1040STE/TOS2.06/Megafile30. I would like to create my

own icons. Is it possible and how?"

Nicholas Bales tells Guillaume:

"You need a resource editor, and to change the newdesk.rsc file to add new icons. There is a limit though, but I can't remember what it is."

Henk Robbers corrects Nick:

"I think you meant 'deskicon.rsc' for the (smaller) mono icons
color icons are in 'deskicn.rsc'"

Edward Baiz adds:

"I have created many icons from scans and other picture files. If you are using Jinnee or Thing, you will need a resource editor. If you are using EASE, then you will need nothing as it has its own icon editor that can load in IMG and RSC files."

David Young asks about MIDI files:

"Does anyone know how to save midi files from an Atari 1040st so that they can be loaded into a pc platform....Win 98. I have a bunch of songs recorded on Atari Cubase 3.0 and I would like to avoid having to play and record each song into my pc sequencer. I want to save the midi files on a disk and load them into the pc. Thanks for any help..."

Nick Bales tells David:

"Midi files are a cross-platform standard. As you said, just stick them on a disk, but make sure it's a 720K DD DOS formatted floppy."

Incidentally, this is in the Quick FAQ: <http://bales.online.fr/atari> "

Martin Bates asks about where to find one his (and MY) favorite programs:

"It has been quite a few years since I have had an ST and there was one program I could not live without now that I am thinking of getting one again - NeoDesk. Could anyone tell me where I may acquire this wonderful program?"

Joe Villarreal tells Martin:

"You can buy Neodesk and Geneva directly from the author. His web page is:

<http://www4.pair.com/gribnif/> "

Lonny Pursell asks about his TT's power supply:

"A couple questions about the TT's power supply unit.

Did anyone ever make a better one (more watts) ?
Is it possible to swap the guts of the PSU itself?

I really do not want to transplant my TT into a peecee case.
I happen to like its odd looks."

David Leaver tells Lonny:

"Bradley Koda of Best Electronics sells original MSTe/TT PSUs and his

own somewhat improved version.

The latter is slightly cheaper because it comes without a case. You have to modify your existing case by removing the centre support of the circuit board.

I have been using an improved one in my TT for about nine months without problems. The original PSU failed with an over voltage condition."

Lonny tells David:

"I found it in their catalog 64 to 80 watts and \$125 ! Don't know if that price is current, even so half that seems rather high to me. I suspect I'll just yank the internal HD and reduce the load."

David replies:

"It seems to me that there is a fair bit of mythology surrounding PSUs.

First, I don't think that there is, or was, too much wrong with the original MSTe/TT PSU. It was well made by an outside supplier that is still selling PSUs, so they cannot have had too bad a reputation. I have never had any sign of a problem with my MSTe, which has a Matrix Coco card in it, which puts a fair extra load on the 5v line, plus 68882.

Second, the PSU in my TT, with 64mb TT ram and Matrix tc1208, failed with an over-voltage condition, not under-voltage. Yes, it had a problem, but insufficient grunt was not that problem.

The Best Electronics replacements are not cheap, but you will always have to pay for a low demand, specialist item. I had already spent many hours going over the original PSU trying to find the fault. I decided to cut my losses.

Third, the components in switch-mode power supplies are not items in which great strides have been made over the past ten years. If they are getting smaller for a given output, it is largely because the components are being pushed harder.

The PSUs in STs and STes are not universal-voltage models, whereas the MSTe/TT supply handles 110-250v inputs. I don't know about the PSU in the Falcon."

Martin Eric Racine adds:

"Brad Koda sells slightly more powerful replacement AT power supplies with some adapter brackets that apparently make it a drop-in substitute. I believe Jo Even bought that a while back."

Jo Even Skarstein jumps in and replies:

"No, I got an AT PSU for free in a local shop and hacked it in myself. If you can find a PSU from a "pizza box" (like many Compaq PCs) that's quite easy, because many of them are actually smaller than the original TT PSU."

Marky Mark asks a very interesting question:

"I've recently acquired an old Atari SCSI interface that is designed to connect to an external SCSI device via a 50 pin connector, then connect back into the DMA port of the Atari.

I was wondering if it would be advisable to install this device inside my PC, connect it to my PC's SCSI card via the 50 pin slot internally, then run the DMA cable back to the Atari so that the Atari could pick up the SCSI chain.

The interface is dated 1987, and has power connectors which look like the same as found in today's PCs (although are coloured differently - yellow blue green white instead of yellow black black red). I was wondering if power and SCSI are of the same standard now as it was then, and could this configuration possibly work?"

Stephen Adam tells Marky:

"I'm about 99% sure that this won't work. The SCSI chain is intended to have a single master. The PC host adapter is one, and the Atari host adapter is another. I don't think you'd fry anything by trying, though. But I might be wrong about that, and two masters will not work anyway.

The power connector is intended for the the same plug that is used on the drives. In other words, the same as in PCs. The different colours make me a bit suspicious, though. But if the socket is the right shape, I'd trust it."

Chris Martin adds:

"Actually, this should work if you only have either the PC or the Atari on (not both). As long as the termination of the chain is okay, this should work, and both computers should be able to read/write to this drive. That is as long as you have all the correct drivers (such as HDDriver for the Atari to read Win95 compatible partitions).

Now, also, there are SCSI drivers out there that allow "multiple initiators". (If memory serves, this is what it is called). I know there are Linux drivers that allow multiple initiators, or multiple hosts, to be on the same SCSI chain. People have used this to connect multiple computers together via the SCSI bus and embed IP over SCSI to allow for a small but fast network. However, I do not think that such a driver exists for the Atari. So, your only option would be to have either computer on at a time....."

Dr. Uwe Seimet, the author of HD Driver, adds his thoughts:

"HDDRIVER supports the SCSI driver's target interface which is a basis for such a network. But there are no appropriate network drivers (e. g. for MiNT) making use of it."

Dan Ackerman posts his experiences:

"I had my TT daisy chained with a mac on my desktop while I was doing some testing. And the TT could access the Mac hard drive while the Mac was on. The one caveat as I understand it, is you have to be certain that only one device is accessing a drive at any point in time. So if

you are networking to a windows box, you would not want to have your atari ever access the boot drive of the PC or what ever drive the virtual memory was on. As it is just about impossible on a windows machine to guarantee that it's not going to access either one of these drives at any given point in time.

You could potentially make things a bit safer (I think) by making a drive that was READ ONLY for the PC OS. You could switch this on and off depending if the atari was on or not.

However don't get too heady with the rush of power. If you try to access the host controller on the other system you will at least bring that OS down in flames. At least this happens on the Mac."

Didier Briel posts this on behalf of Guillaume Tello :

"I send this message on behalf of Guillaume Tello.

Since he is no longer programming on his Atari, he has decided to release all his software as freeware, including source code.

All the archives can be found at <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/gtello>

Now a personal word:

While it is always a little sad when one of our programmers abandon the platform, I would like to personally thank Guillaume for the decision he took. Releasing his work as freeware, sources included, is a great farewell, rather than burying his work."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section  - Sony to Launch Portable PlayStation!
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                                Gaming Goes Wireless!  Songbird News!
                                'Gauntlet Legends'!  Lara Croft Does GBC!
                                And much more!
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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Sony to Launch Portable PlayStation on July 7

Sony Corp.'s game-making unit, Sony Computer Entertainment, said on Thursday it would launch a portable version of its older 32-bit PlayStation console in a bid to remain ahead of the pack in the lucrative video game market.

The new product -- PSone -- can be connected to mobile phones, allowing users to download game programs or exchange data with each other, Sony said in a statement.

PSone, priced at \$142, is one-third the size of the 32-bit PlayStation console which enjoyed runaway sales of some 70 million units in the past five years.

But unlike the world's most popular hand-held game player, the Game Boy made by SCE archrival Nintendo Co. Ltd., the PSone has to be plugged into an electric power source.

PSone sales in Japan will start on July 7 and in the United States and Europe in the autumn. Sony will aim for combined shipments of the older PlayStation and PSone of eight million units per year.

SCE officials said the company expected the older PlayStation to be phased out gradually in favor of PSone, which would account for some three-quarters of the eight million units in targeted shipments.

The original version of the PlayStation, recently Sony's most successful product, generated about 40 percent of its consolidated operating profits in 1998/99.

Sony also announced plans to launch a hard disc drive and a broadband network adapter unit this winter for the next-generation PlayStation2 console, which was launched in March in Japan and will debut in the U.S. and Europe in the autumn.

The new devices will enable the cutting edge 128-bit game machine to connect to the Internet and store downloaded game programs. The machine, which includes a digital video disc (DVD) player, has enjoyed runaway sales since its launch.

SCE said last week it would spend 125 billion yen to boost output of chips used in PlayStation2 to smooth its overseas debut in October.

Sony aims to ship four million PlayStation2 machines in Japan and three million each in Europe and the United States in the business year to next March.

The PSone announcement came after the Tokyo stock market closed. Sony's shares slipped 2.27 percent or 250 yen to 10,750 in a market dominated by uncertainty ahead of Friday's release of Japan's January-March gross domestic product data.

Sony is facing tough global competition, with U.S. software giant Microsoft Corp. due to enter the lucrative video game market next year with its "X-Box" high-performance console.

Earlier on Thursday, struggling Japanese game console maker Sega Enterprises Ltd. said it will offer broadband Internet access through its Dreamcast machine in Japan from next month in a bid to catch up with Sony.

Gekido Bursts Onto the Scene With Mass Market Appeal

Interplay Entertainment Corp. and Infogrames announced the release of its furious four-player fighter, Gekido, for the Sony PlayStation. Complete with cover art from Joe Madureira and music tracks from both Fatboy Slim and Apartment 26, this title is sure to turn heads and provide an adrenaline rush to gamers of all ages.

Developed by NAPS and Infogrames Sheffield House, Gekido is taking its place next to the legends of the beat-'em up genre. Having already been labeled, "One of the best examples of the genre we've ever seen," by Daily Radar, this fighter is poised to deliver some of the most dynamic character portraits and explosive in-game visuals to hit the 32-bit arena. Inspired by the classic fighting adventure Streets of Rage, Gekido takes the extra step by adding a multitude of new character moves in what will surely go down as one of Interplay's greatest fighters. Perhaps Incite.com summed it up best by stating, "The game kicks a**."

The soundtrack for Gekido is comprised of music from industry giant, Fatboy Slim, and the up-and-coming rockers, Apartment 26. Both music heavyweights have lent their talents to the new 3D fighting adventure by contributing two tracks each. Fatboy Slim was nominated for two prestigious Grammy awards earlier this year. Meanwhile, Apartment 26 will be on the Mission: Impossible-2 soundtrack, in addition to joining the Ozzfest 2000 tour this summer.

World renowned comic book artist, Joe Madureira, has also contributed his talents by constructing the cover art for the game. With countless comic book covers to his credit, this is his first venture into the world of interactive entertainment software.

'CROC' Leaps Into Action On Game Boy Color

Interactive entertainment publishers THQ Inc. and Fox Interactive announced the shipment of "CROC" for Game Boy Color.

Resulting from a previous agreement between the interactive partners, THQ's release of "CROC" on the portable hand-held system marks the first of several FOX properties to be released later this year. Available today at retail stores nationwide, "CROC" for the Game Boy Color delivers an all-new Croc adventure at a suggested retail price of \$29.95.

"'Croc: Legend of the Gobbos' has enjoyed tremendous success on PlayStation including 'Greatest Hits' status," said Alison Locke, vice president THQ marketing and sales. "THQ is delighted to bring the popular Croc character to Game Boy Color and give Croc fans a truly rich hand-held adventure experience."

"THQ's success on the Game Boy Color System makes them the ideal publishing partner for Fox Interactive's established Croc franchise," stated Dave Shaw, executive director of marketing for Fox Interactive. "Croc's adventure continues on the most popular portable gaming platform, bringing new fans to Fox's lovable green hero."

In "CROC" for Game Boy Color, players assume the role of Croc on a quest

to rescue the peace-loving Gobbos from the evil clutches of Baron Dante, king of the Dantinis villains. Varied gameplay gives gamers the opportunity to ski through slippery slopes, hitch rides on cable cars, race on magic carpets and swim through shark-infested waters.

With four worlds composed of 30 different environments and multiple mini games to explore, there are plenty of new adventures in store for long-time Croc fans and Game Boy Color enthusiasts in "CROC."

"CROC" for Game Boy Color was developed by UK-based game developer, Argonaut Software, Ltd.

THQ Ships "Tomb Raider Starring Lara Croft" for Game Boy Color

THQ Inc. announced the release of "Tomb Raider Starring Lara Croft" for Game Boy Color from Eidos Interactive's Tomb Raider franchise. Developed by Core and licensed through Eidos Interactive, THQ will send the famed Tomb Raider protagonist, Lara Croft, to new heights on the Game Boy Color system to retail outlets nationwide.

"Tomb Raider is one of the strongest franchises in interactive entertainment," stated Peter Dille, vice president, marketing, THQ. "We are delighted to add a property of its magnitude to THQ's proven Game Boy Color library."

"As the top third party Game Boy Color publisher, THQ is an ideal candidate to publish the Tomb Raider franchise," stated Jeremy Heath-Smith, global head of development, Eidos Interactive. "We look forward to new success for Tomb Raider on the Game Boy Color system."

Making its debut on the Game Boy Color, "Tomb Raider Starring Lara Croft" is based on the extended Tomb Raider adventures. In her latest adventure for the Game Boy Color, Lara Croft sets out to find and protect the "Nightmare Stone." If our heroine fails to find the stone before deviant treasure hunters do, Quaxet, the evil god trapped in the "Nightmare Stone" will escape and run havoc over the Aztec, Mayan and Inca lands. "Tomb Raider Starring Lara Croft" for Game Boy Color is a side-scrolling adventure filled with puzzles, pitfalls and over 50 Lara-laden cut scenes.

"Unlike other 3D games that have been adapted to Game Boy, Tomb Raider doesn't come off as a cookie-cutter side-scroller that just so happens to have a recognizable hero plopped into it," said Nintendo Power Magazine, May 2000. "Instead, Lara's latest adventure is Tomb Raider through and through, keeping the franchise's trademark moves, action, style and puzzles, and even Lara's auto targeting in tact."

Arcade Perfection Comes Home With Midway's "Gauntlet Legends" for Sega Dreamcast

Midway Games Inc. announced that "Gauntlet Legends" for Sega Dreamcast is shipping to retail outlets today.

The latest version of the classic coin-op favorite, "Gauntlet Legends"

takes full advantage of the performance capabilities of the Sega Dreamcast in order to bring home the look and feel of the original arcade version.

The multi-player capability of this latest version for the Sega Dreamcast allows up to four players to cooperate in the quest to eliminate Skorne and his minions from the Realms of Gauntlet.

Midway's latest version of "Gauntlet Legends" has four new characters making their home debut -- the Dwarf, Sorceress, Knight and the Jester -- in addition to other features that were created for the recently released coin-op "Gauntlet Dark Legacy" arcade sequel.

With higher resolution geometry than any previous version, "Gauntlet Legends" for the Sega Dreamcast mirrors the highly detailed and crisp fantasy look found in the arcade version of its namesake. The RPG elements, classical fantasy landscapes and settings and cooperative action of "Gauntlet Legends" brings a fresh look to the Sega Dreamcast.

"Gauntlet Legends' one-of-a-kind blend of RPG and action elements has made this a very successful and widely-embraced franchise both in the arcade and home arenas," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway Games.

"This is the most advanced adaptation of the 'Gauntlet' installment yet and will please fans familiar with both the arcade and home game console versions."

Characters in "Gauntlet Legends" for Sega Dreamcast cooperate to explore fantastical realms, face hordes of monsters, search for treasure, avoid traps, use magic and make their way from one world to the next in order to defeat the evil wizard Skorne.

Using the exact same dataset and engine as the arcade version, this latest offering recreates the lush visual look, dynamic lighting and special effects of the original.

Midway is backing the launch of "Gauntlet Legends" for Sega Dreamcast with a marketing campaign that includes an awareness-building, four-week advertising run on network and cable television as well as diverse print and online advertising. Participating retailers will also carry in-store POP, posters and shelf talkers.

In addition to television commercials, print advertising and online support, Midway has created a set of five miniature pewter game figures based on some of the most popular characters from "Gauntlet Legends." A set of these figures is offered free (via mail-in redemption) to everyone who purchases "Gauntlet Legends" for the Sega Dreamcast. These one-of-a-kind collectibles will bring the role-playing aspect of the game to life.

Midway has also created an online sweepstakes that will offer consumers a chance to win copies of "Gauntlet Legends" for Sega Dreamcast. The "Gauntlet Legends Treasure Hunt" features a fun and interactive trip around the Midway Web site: www.midway.com.

Similar to "Gauntlet Legends," where players must find missing "rune stones" to defeat Skorne, consumers are encouraged to search www.midway.com for 14 rune stones that together spell out the answer to a puzzle. Players who enter the correct phrase will gain entry into a drawing for one of 50 copies of the game.

“Gauntlet Legends” for the Sega Dreamcast Key Features

- Based on the No. 1 arcade game, "Gauntlet Legends"
- Up to four-player cooperative gaming
- Twelve characters, including four from the new "Gauntlet Dark Legacy" arcade game
- Ten worlds, for a total 41 levels, complete with unique monsters, bosses, traps and puzzles
- Innovative multi-player combination moves and puzzles
- Characters advance through 99 levels of experience, gaining attribute strength with each level
- Analog stick control for maximum experience
- Support of the optional jump pack to give one more dimension of immersive experience to the gameplay

Gauntlet Legends is currently available for the PlayStation game console and Nintendo 64.

Club Acclaim Ships Bust-A-Move 4 And Spreads Puzzle-Fever To Stores

Club Acclaim, a division of Acclaim Entertainment, announced that Bust-A-Move 4 for Sega Dreamcast is shipping to national retail stores.

Developed by Taito, Bust-A-Move 4 marks the premier appearance of Club Acclaim's well-established Bust-A-Move franchise on Sega Dreamcast and will be priced to sell at a suggested retail price of under \$30.

“The addictive gameplay of Bust-A-Move has made it one of Acclaim's most popular franchises," said Christina Recchio, Marketing Manager, Club Acclaim. “This game has large appeal to both the casual gamer and the long time game enthusiast."

Bust-A-Move 4 features thousands of all-new puzzles with new bubbles and obstructive blocks, using high-resolution graphics that showcase the Sega Dreamcast system. Players will experience hours of competitive multi-player gameplay from exciting game modes including: Puzzle, CPU, Head-to-Head, Challenge and Collection which offers hundreds of bubble bursting puzzles. Bust-A-Move 4's Edit Mode allows players to create their own mind-popping puzzles and save them to a memory card.

Square Ships Legend of MANA for the PlayStation

Square Electronic Arts(SM) L.L.C. announced the release of LEGEND OF MANA for the PlayStation game console.

The 2D role playing game is set against a magical storybook backdrop where the player is a hero on a mission to restore a barren land. The rich storyline is packed with quests, spells, weapons, an array of monsters and bosses to battle and approximately 70 sub-events including mini-games that will keep players challenged for hours.

LEGEND OF MANA players assume the role of a male or female character and embark on a quest to rebuild the once great world of Fa'Diel. Players reconstruct the world using a land creation system that allows them to generate different regions with the help of artifacts they discover throughout the game. Lands are depicted in beautiful, hand-drawn watercolors that reflect an array of landscapes from a harbor and ancient ruins to a bone fortress and mountain peaks.

As players create and explore their new lands, they meet, share information with and/or battle with friends and foes. There is an array of bosses equipped with their own brand of magic to lay waste to attackers. These bosses spring up throughout the game to challenge players. For instance, the Gorgon Eye is a giant floating eye with spikes that confounds its enemies by teleporting around the screen and paralyzing its opponents. Visually stunning monsters, such as dragons and flying insects, are also interspersed in the game creating hurdles for the player to get around.

Adding to the strategy of the game, LEGEND OF MANA players can ward off evil with their own customized spells and weapons. Spells are generated by the instruments players create in their home workshops. For instance, the player can create a wind-calling harp that summons a gust of air to attack enemies. Another powerful spell conjures up a water bubble casting flute that spews a tidal wave of water upon attackers. As players progress through the game battling enemies, they learn many fighting techniques. Once learned, players can unleash three quick "power attacks" on enemies. Players also have a variety of weapons at their disposal such as swords, axes and spears.

LEGEND OF MANA contains about 70 sub-events and mini-games to entertain players. For instance, included is a mini-game that can be played using some of the title's 26 artifacts. It is called the Landbopper and is akin to a carnival-like game where players strike moles with cloth or leather hammers. The game also offers a few surprises such as monster eggs. Players can capture and raise the eggs in their backyard corrals. Once grown, these pet monsters can be used to aid players in battles.

LEGEND OF MANA is compatible with the DUALSHOCK analog controller and has a suggested retail price of (US)\$40. The game carries an ESRB rating of "T" (Teen).

Infogrames Chips in PGA European Tour for Nintendo 64 to Stores This Week

Infogrames announced Thursday that its golf simulation game, PGA European Tour, is shipping to stores this week.

PGA European Tour for the Nintendo 64 game console features the European Tour (European PGA) license with 64 established European stars and four European golf courses.

"European golfers have become increasingly more popular in America with

events like last year's Ryder Cup," said Laddie Ervin, director of marketing for sports and racing titles for Infogrames. "PGA European Tour features virtually all the top European golfers while giving Nintendo 64 owners an intuitive yet realistic golf simulation."

Gamers can play as famous European golfers such as, Steve Ballesteros, Nick Faldo, Colin Montgomerie, and Jose Maria Olazabal, on four different European courses -- The K Club (Ireland), Druid's Glen (Ireland), Kungsängen (Sweden) or, Quinta do Lago (Portugal). All the courses include real-world weather effects and time-of-day which affect gameplay and graphics. The BBC's Peter Allis provides witty, authentic commentary on the players' gameplay throughout the match.

PGA European Tour features several gameplay modes, from quick practice to multiplayer matches:

- Quick Match -- a quick round of 18 holes on a randomly selected course.
- Non-Tour Golf -- one to four players can partake in various non-tour related games and practice activities. Games include strokeplay, matchplay and skins while practice modes include practice hole, driving range, putting range and short game.
- EPGA Tour -- begin your career as an amateur in the Challenge Tour and work your way through the European Tour Qualifying School to earn a spot on the PGA Tour. Play against the world's top golfers to attain a number one ranking.

PGA European Tour for Nintendo 64 was developed by Infogrames Sheffield House and will be available for an estimated retail price of \$49.99 at most major retail outlets. For more information visit the PGA European Tour site at www.europeantour-thegame.com

Sega Redefines the Music Action Genre With Space Channel 5 for Sega Dreamcast

Gettin' your groove on has never been so fun! Sega of America, Inc. announced the release of "Space Channel 5" for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. Starring Ulala, an indelible dance diva and fledgling space age newscaster, "Space Channel 5" challenges players to help her out-dance alien funksters (a.k.a. Morolians) in order to free their human captives and save the universe. Developed by Tetsuya Mizuguchi, the creator of "Sega Rally Championship" and many other hits, "Space Channel 5" heralds an all new style of console gaming. This hip title is driven by an engaging storyline, groovy techno tunes, fashionably in-vogue characters, and gameplay that players of all ages and sexes will enjoy.

Set in the 25th century, the Morolian alien race have attacked and subdued innocent humans with their dance-inflicting ray guns. Fortunately for the galaxy, Ulala, an up-and-coming reporter working at Space Channel 5, has the moves and rhythmic talent to free the captives from this alien dance trance. In order to break the Morolians' hypnotic grasp, Ulala must mimic the aliens' exact dance maneuvers by keeping the beat with pauses, quick repeats and moves timed to perfection. However, the storyline has some additional twists and turns that don't take place on the dance floor, involving a ratings-driven producer named Fuse, and Pudding, a former teen

idol turned reporter for rival Channel 42. With plenty of weight on the galactic diva's shoulders, Ulala steps up to the challenge - empowered and in style - to save the universe.

"Sega is setting new standards in console gaming with the release of 'Space Channel 5,'" said Stacey Kerr, product manager, Sega of America. "The unique premise and design of 'Space Channel 5,' combined with Ulala's hip style redefine the music action genre for Sega Dreamcast."

In addition to Ulala, a host of over 78 unique characters make appearances with the passing of each level in "Space Channel 5." Characters such as "Space Kung Fu Man," "Space Dogs" and a special "Moonwalking" celebrity captive ("Space Michael"), appear throughout the game and on replays in various hidden levels and mini-quests that add fun and excitement to "Space Channel 5."

The Visual Memory Unit (VMU) and Jump Pack can be used to enhance the "Space Channel 5" gaming experience. Game data can be stored on the VMU, while the Jump Pack provides force feedback in the controller when a player is performing poorly.

"Space Channel 5" is available for \$39.95 at retailers nationwide and at www.sega.com.

Activision Ships Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram The Explosive Sega Dreamcast Sequel to Arcade Hit Virtual-On

Virtuaroids of immense size and power will rule Sega Dreamcast when Activision, Inc. ships Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram the week of June 5, 2000. The lightning-fast combat game will be available in retail outlets across North America and has been rated "T" by the ESRB. Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram will carry a suggested retail price of \$49.95.

The sequel to the arcade classic Virtual-On: Cyber Troopers, Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram ("VOOT") for Sega Dreamcast is a pixel-by-pixel replica of the frenetic 3rd person arcade version. VOOT blasted its way up the Japanese game charts selling over 150,000 units in the first month of release and has now set its sights on North America. The title has received critical praise from the gaming press and has been hailed by GameFan magazine as, "The title hardcore gamers have been waiting for."

"We are pleased to be able bring such a stellar property as Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram to the North American gaming community," states Michael Pole executive vice president worldwide studios, Activision, Inc. "The Virtual-On franchise has a loyal fan-base and the game's intense third-person combat and fast-paced 60 fps action will deliver an unparalleled gaming experience that Virtual-On fans have come to expect."

Developed by Sega of Japan, Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram is set in a sci-fi future that pits giant virtuaroids against each other in a battle royale. Players fight as 11 virtuaroids (and one secret character) in high intensity battles using an array of weapons including bazookas, swarm missiles and lasers in an effort to reach the final and most powerful enemy, Tangram. Each virtuaroid employs a unique combination of weapons, speed, strength and ranges of combat moves.

Gamers must dodge enemy fire behind buildings and obstructions as

explosives ignite all around them while they battle through 17 intense 3-D arenas including sci-fi cities, an underwater environment, a space station and a desert. Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram uses detailed graphics, smooth animations and frenzied 60-fps gameplay to add an immersive and highly charged element to the game.

Additionally, the game offers a variety of play modes, allowing players to battle against an arcade opponent or go all out against a friend using a two-player horizontal or vertical split screen. Other modes include Replay, Training and Watch. Gamers can choose from six easy-to-control configurations that will allow their Dreamcast controllers to work as easily, seamlessly and frenetically as in the arcade.

Sega, Motorola, Sun Play Wireless Games

Sega Enterprises, Motorola and Sun Microsystems plan to offer videogames on wireless phones and other devices as early as the end of this year, the companies announced this morning.

The games would be developed in Sun's Java 2 platform, which lets content producers create software for a broad range of devices, including set-top boxes and mobile devices.

Although most of the games being announced at Sun Microsystems' JavaOne 2000 Conference in San Francisco would be single-player games, a Sega spokesman said online multiplayer games, which let phone owners interact with PC customers and Sega's Internet service customers, are not too far off. He declined to elaborate on specifics.

Perhaps in anticipation of the video-game onslaught from Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft, Sega is hoping to broaden its distribution of content. The announcement follows on the heels of its intentions to create a new Internet company, SegaNet, by the end of the summer.

SegaNet would offer dialup modem Internet services through a deal with GTE. Subscribers who commit to paying \$21.95 per month for two years would be offered a rebate on the entire purchase price of Sega's next-generation Dreamcast unit.

Sega's commitment to broaden its distribution is also part of a trend in the electronic entertainment industry to offer games on wireless devices. In Japan, Sony Computer Entertainment, the unit that developed PlayStation, has struck a partnership with NTT DoCoMo wireless phone service to offer games on phone handsets.

While Sony has hinted at expanding these services to Europe, the Americas remain a distant goal, company executives have said, citing the abundance of wireless standards as a major hurdle for any company trying to court the North American market.

Meanwhile, online game companies such as Boxerjam and Pogo are close to delivering games to wireless devices and phones.

Sega, having jumped out of the gate first with its Dreamcast system, is hoping to widen the gap. Sony is set to release its latest system, PlayStation2, in October.

With this announcement, as well as others related to distribution on set-top boxes coming down the pike, Sega is positioning itself to become a premier provider of games across multiple platforms.

Despite its momentum, Sega insists that its hardware-console-games business will remain a focus for the company for the time being. "The console market is very, very important for us," says Sega VP of Marketing Charles Bellfield. "Sega needs that strong foundation to create games and have a customer base."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -      Online Users Growl & Purr!
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SONGBIRD ANNOUNCES CGE2K LINEUP

June 9, 2000

For immediate release:

ROCHESTER, MN -- Songbird Productions recently unveiled its plans for new products to be available at Classic Gaming Expo 2000, which will be held in Las Vegas at the Jackie Gaughan Plaza Hotel during July 29-30.

Topping off the list is the long-awaited release of Crystal Mines II: Buried Treasure. This Win-95/98/00 software allows consumers to build, swap, and download new levels on their existing Crystal Mines II Lynx game cartridge. Over 50 brand new levels are included, as well as the original 150+ CM2 levels. Plus, it includes all the tools and documentation needed to help anyone get started designing their own levels. MSRP for CM2:BT is \$29.95 for the CD, and \$49.95 for the CD and Lynx-to-PC cable.

In an unexpected move, Songbird also announced the availability of a "CGE2K special edition" version of Remnant, the highly-anticipated 3D space combat game for the Lynx. "This is a game no Lynx fan should be without," commented Carl Forhan, owner of Songbird and the developer of Remnant. "It puts the Lynx into high gear -- from the explosions to the 3D scaling to the audio, Remnant sets a new standard for 'next generation' Lynx games." This special edition of Remnant is a complete game, and features more than a dozen sectors to clear in the Arcade play mode. A future version of Remnant is anticipated to include a Strategic play mode as well, where the player must repel enemy squadrons and protect friendly outposts. MSRP for Remnant is \$39.95.

Not to leave Jaguar fans out, Songbird also has plans to offer for sale a new Rapid Fire Controller for the Atari Jaguar. Carl explained the benefits of the new controller: "Titles such as Zero 5 and Raiden are great games on the Jaguar, but can suffer

from slow fire rates which force the player to mash buttons repeatedly. The RFC is simply a modified 18-button controller with a special circuit that allows the player to enable or disable multiple fire rates on the A and B buttons." The RFC has been tested by several individuals and received very favorable feedback so far. MSRP for the RFC is \$39.95. Only limited quantities will be available for sale at CGE2K.

Songbird Productions is the premier developer and publisher for the Atari Lynx and Jaguar. To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at <http://songbird.atari.net>.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Justice Opposes Key Microsoft Plan

Justice Department antitrust lawyers objected Monday to Microsoft's suggestion that a full year be granted to develop details of the software company's breakup for anti-competitive practices.

In its last expected court filing before a federal judge decides how to punish the company, the government said that a full year "is unwarranted."

The department has proposed to U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson that "not later than four months" after a final judgment, the company must submit a proposed plan for the breakup. Jackson already has found that Microsoft stifled competition in violation of federal antitrust law.

Government lawyers requested the opportunity to file the legal brief to present the judge with areas of minor agreements. Most of these agreements involved definitions, such as using the word "divestiture" rather than "reorganization."

But the Justice lawyers, who filed suit along with 19 states, also stated numerous objections to the last proposals by Microsoft. The company has until Wednesday to respond, and Jackson could render his ruling anytime afterward.

The filings this week do not change the proposal by the department and 17 of the state plaintiffs that Microsoft be split into two companies.

The government listed 20 pages of Microsoft proposals that it rejected.

The brief said many Microsoft suggestions "would create loopholes and permit Microsoft to continue to engage in anti-competitive practices like those found by the court or otherwise to frustrate or undermine the purposes of the final judgment.

“The balance are unnecessary because of existing, express provisions of the final judgment.”

Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said the government’s proposals “confirm our worst fears, that the government is deciding how Microsoft should design its software, which will, in the end, harm consumers.”

Cullinan added that the past week of legal filings “is no substitute” for the longer process Microsoft had unsuccessfully sought to challenge the breakup plan.

Among the objections, the department said it disagreed with Microsoft’s proposal to delete a provision involving contracts with other companies. The government wants to ban the corporation from entering into contracts that restrict other firms’ ability to develop, distribute and promote non-Microsoft software.

“Such agreements were an important part of Microsoft’s illegal campaign against Netscape’s browser,” the department said.

The government also rejected the company’s proposal that it not be required to retain its e-mails.

“There is no sound reason, in light of the evidence in this case, that Microsoft cannot, and ought not to be required to, retain the e-mails” the department contended.

The brief attached a deposition by Microsoft chairman Bill Gates who testified, “most people here delete most of the e-mail they receive every day. I delete 98 percent of my e-mails.”

Microsoft’s Last Filing Says U.S. Plan Flawed

Microsoft Corp on Tuesday repeated its criticisms of the government proposal to split the company, making its last filing in the antitrust case a day earlier than expected and clearing the way for final ruling soon.

In an eight-page filing, Microsoft said the government made only cosmetic changes to the plan on Monday when it made its final filing. The world’s largest software firm said the government plan has fundamental problems.

With no further filings left, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson could rule any time on his remedy in the case. He found on April 3 that Microsoft broke U.S. antitrust laws.

Judge Orders Microsoft Split in Two

A federal judge on Wednesday ordered software powerhouse Microsoft Corp. to be split in two in a final antitrust ruling that could change the face of computing around the world.

And, in an effort to speed up what could otherwise be a lengthy appeal, the Justice Department said it would ask the Supreme Court to hear the case

immediately.

In his ruling, District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson said the company would remain intact until all appeals are exhausted.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates said the company would challenge the order within days. "We will be appealing this decision and we believe we have a very strong case on appeal."

Jackson in April found Microsoft broke U.S. antitrust law by abusing its monopoly in personal computer operating systems to harm consumers and intimidate competitors.

Jackson's order mirrored government proposals to split the company in two. One of the new Microsoft companies would develop and sell operating systems such as Windows while the other would own Microsoft's remaining software and online businesses.

If the judgement is upheld, it would be the harshest antitrust action taken against a U.S. corporation since AT&T agreed to spin off the "baby bell" regional phone companies in 1982. It is one of the biggest antitrust battles in history, often compared with the breakup of oil baron John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil in 1911.

"Microsoft, as it is presently organized and led, is unwilling to accept the notion that it broke the law or accede to an order amending its conduct," Jackson said in his 23-page order.

Under the order, Microsoft would also face restrictions on its business conduct, including giving outside software developers greater access to the Windows source code.

Microsoft's stock, which had closed up 7/8 at 70-1/2 on the Nasdaq market, rose to 71-7/8 in after-hours trading following the judge's order.

Justice Department antitrust chief Joel Klein said the department would ask the Supreme Court to hear the appeal immediately under a little-invoked 1903 amendment to the Sherman Antitrust Act.

But several legal experts have said they believed the high court would decline to receive the case on an expedited basis, sending it back for appeals court review, which could take years.

Since its 1975 founding, Microsoft has grown to become the world's most valuable software company with annual revenues of over \$20 billion a year. It has made Gates one of the world's richest men and helped keep the United States at the forefront of the digital age.

With 60 foreign offices and its software used from Argentina to Zimbabwe, a breakup would eventually affect computer users worldwide.

In its rationale for splitting the company, the government said the measure would prevent the Windows system, which runs on over 80 percent of personal computers, from being used to force companies and consumers to use other Microsoft products.

Cleaving the company in two could also encourage development of alternative operating systems and prompt versions of programs like Microsoft Office to run on those systems.

Microsoft said a breakup would harm consumers by preventing it from developing integrated products. The firm also says it would damage employee morale and hurt investors.

It appears unlikely the case will be fully resolved before the swearing in of a new president in January -- either Republican George W. Bush or Democrat Al Gore. There is speculation in Washington that Bush would be more skeptical of the government case.

Microsoft to File for Appeal, Stay Within Days

Microsoft Corp. will quickly file an appeal and request for stay of a federal judge's order splitting it in two and restricting its business conduct, the software giant's general counsel said on Wednesday.

"We will file the notice of appeal and stay just as soon as possible, in the matter of a very few days," attorney Bill Neukom told a news conference here following the ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson.

Neukom said he expected the appeals process to last for several months, or possibly more than a year depending on how the process unfolded. The Department of Justice has said it plans to send the antitrust case directly to the Supreme Court.

"I anticipate that the appellate phase of this will go on for probably a number of months, maybe even at least a year or longer depending on where we go in the appellate process," Neukom said.

While it was possible a stay may not be granted, Neukom voiced confidence in Microsoft's request, saying, "There is no guarantee of a stay. I think on this record, both the substance and the lack of any process for Microsoft to put evidence in front of this court makes a compelling case for a stay of virtually all of the relief that has been entered in this final judgement."

Microsoft Files for Immediate Stay

Undaunted by a federal judge's order to break Microsoft Corp. in two, company co-founder and Chairman Bill Gates insists the computer software giant has not broken antitrust laws. The company today filed for a stay of U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's order.

"This is the beginning of a new chapter in this case," Gates said. "We will be appealing this decision, and we believe we have a very strong case on appeal."

Sitting in Washington, D.C., Jackson on Wednesday approved the breakup proposal that had been offered by the federal government and 17 of the 19 states that joined in a suit against the company. He said any other action would simply encourage Microsoft to continue engaging in anticompetitive behavior.

"There is credible evidence ... to suggest Microsoft, convinced of its own

innocence, continues to do business as it has in the past, and may yet do to other markets what it has already done in the PC operating system and browser markets," Jackson wrote in ordering the most dramatic antitrust breakup in the United States since AT&T in 1984.

Microsoft today filed its request for an immediate stay of Jackson's order, including the business restrictions the judge placed on the company. Jackson has not ruled on the request, but is expected to refuse it. Microsoft would then be free to ask for a stay from an appeals court, which would be more likely to grant it.

Interviewed today on CBS' "The Early Show," Gates said: "The judge apparently formed those opinions even before this case began. We had a previous case in front of this judge where the appeals court overruled him entirely.

"I'm disappointed," Gates said of Wednesday's ruling. "The rules were clear. Microsoft followed those rules, and now we simply need to get the higher court to make that clear."

In addition to splitting Microsoft into two companies - one for operating systems and the other for other software and Internet properties - Jackson also imposed restrictions on Microsoft's business practices, due to take effect in 90 days.

After the issue of a stay is decided, the Justice Department then likely would ask Jackson to fast-track Microsoft's appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, bypassing the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, said Joel Klein, who heads Justice's antitrust division.

In an interview with The Washington Post in today's editions, Jackson said he was "favorably inclined" toward sending it straight to the Supreme Court.

Microsoft attorney William Neukom said the company would oppose any attempt to send the case straight to the Supreme Court, saying the place to argue it is in the appeals court. That court ruled in Microsoft's favor in an earlier decision by Jackson.

Joel I. Klein, assistant attorney general and head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, said today he thought Jackson's ruling was a sound one and "I believe it will be upheld."

Gates, the Harvard University dropout who helped build Microsoft into one of the world's richest companies, said, "This is clearly the most massive attempt at government regulation of the technology industry ever, and it was conceived by the government and imposed by this ruling without a single day of testimony or scrutiny."

Microsoft was expected to base part of its appeal on the fact that Jackson cut off hearings during the penalty phase of the case.

Since it began in 1975, Microsoft has become the dominant force in the software industry, with its Windows operating system running more than 90 percent of the world's personal computers.

In 1997, the Justice Department sued Microsoft, alleging it violated a 1994 consent decree by forcing computer makers to sell its Internet browser as a condition of selling Windows.

On April 3 of this year, following a 78-day trial, Jackson concluded that Microsoft had illegally protected its monopoly in computer operating systems, thus stifling competition. He also found the company tried illegally to expand its dominance into the market for Internet browsers.

Microsoft "doesn't understand how abusive they are of their monopoly position," said James Barksdale, former chief executive of Netscape Communications Corp., whose Web browser lost a battle for dominance with Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

"In this case I think the market should have decided," said Janet Barrs, 30, a production coordinator for a Salt Lake City photography studio. "I have nothing against government, but sometimes they do things for the wrong reason."

Jeff King, a computer systems consultant with Cellular South, from Raymond, Miss., countered, "Why didn't they cut off the giant at its knees? Instead, they just cut it off at the toes. I wonder how they're going to fight two monopolies now."

In Washington, Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said he was concerned about Jackson's decision, "not because I believe that Microsoft is completely blameless, but because there are other options that would have far less impact on the company and the economy while still sending a strong signal that anticompetitive behavior will not be tolerated."

Jackson's ruling imposes several measures designed to protect Microsoft's competitors.

Among them, he ordered Microsoft to divulge to outside developers technical information about the way Microsoft operating systems interact with its software. Those developers will be able to pick apart the computer code without cost to improve their understanding of it and make their own products.

Microsoft also would no longer control what icons are on the Windows operating screen when a user buys a computer. This means that consumers buying a computer from a distributor such as Dell or Gateway could see a desktop that looks nothing like the Windows desktop they're accustomed to.

Microsoft Happy in Seattle, Won't Move to Canada

Microsoft Corp. and Canadian officials poured cold water on reports authorities in British Columbia were trying to lure the software behemoth north amid its antitrust battle with the U.S. government.

Microsoft, which has been in the Seattle area since the late 1970s and employs nearly 20,000 people in its sprawling corporate campus in Redmond, Wash., said it was staying put.

"There is no truth to the reports of any intent to move the company," Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said Friday.

A report on the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) Web site said that by moving its headquarters into Canada, Microsoft would frustrate attempts by U.S. anti-trust officials to break up the company.

“Microsoft believes we will win this (antitrust) case in the (U.S. federal) court of appeals and we are very happy here in Seattle,” Cullinan said.

The BBC report said officials in British Columbia had offered to do a deal with Microsoft that could include a loan to build a new headquarters.

B.C. Investment Minister Gordon Wilson, whose office was cited as the source of the offer, said the rumor that the province had offered an incentive deal began with a California newsletter on technology stocks.

“I haven’t had any formal talks with anyone with Microsoft,” Wilson told reporters in Victoria, the province’s capital.

Other Canadian observers said it was unlikely that the world’s biggest software company would pack up and move.

“I wouldn’t put much credence in it, quite frankly,” Darcy Rezac, managing director of the Vancouver Board of Trade, said of the BBC report.

“Microsoft may have its battles with the U.S. government, but it’s an excellent corporate citizen of Seattle. The suggestion that they’d move their headquarters to Vancouver would be wonderful if it were possible, but I just wouldn’t put credence in it.”

“I think it’s just a little bit of puffery coming out of California by people in the industry who think that Microsoft has been badly treated,” said Frank Came, executive director of the Vancouver Economic Development Commission (VEDC).

Cullinan said Microsoft has received suggestions over the years from countries such as Norway, Ireland and China that it should relocate its headquarters or build a large presence outside of the United States.

Microsoft, founded in Albuquerque, N.M., in 1975, relocated to Bellevue, Wash. in January 1979 and to its current Redmond site in 1986.

Philippines Drops Case Against ‘Love Bug’ Suspect

Philippine authorities said on Wednesday they had dropped a case against a bank worker suspected of involvement in the “Love Bug” virus, which caused billions of dollars in damage to computers around the world.

Senior state prosecutor Jaafar Dimaampao said there was no law which could be used to prosecute 27-year-old Reonel Ramones.

“As far as Ramones is concerned, the case is closed,” Dimaampao told reporters.

The prosecutor said the National Bureau of Investigation could not produce the extra evidence ordered by a court to allow a case against the man to proceed under the Access Device Act.

The act deals with illegal use of passwords for credit cards or bank accounts for money.

Ramones was arrested by NBI agents after a preliminary investigation of

the origin of the "Love Bug" led to a flat which he shared with his girlfriend.

He was later freed by the Justice Department due to lack of evidence, but was made to face criminal charges.

Ramones claimed it was a case of mistaken identity.

The NBI has identified other possible suspects, including computer school dropout Onel de Guzman.

De Guzman's lawyer said his client may have accidentally sent out the virus by mistake.

NBI and Justice Department officials did not say if they would bring any charges against other suspects.

The computer virus, which appeared in emails titled "I Love You," destroyed user files, stole passwords and passed itself on through the address books of affected computers.

It hit major agencies around the world, including the U.S. Pentagon and the British parliament.

Microsoft Issues Anti-Virus Patch

Microsoft Corp. on Thursday released a patch to its popular Outlook e-mail program to protect against viruses like the "ILOVEYOU" bug that caused billions of dollars in damage last month.

The patch, in its default mode, prevents Outlook users from running any "executable" program attachments to e-mail, good or bad. As an additional safeguard, any time a computer program attempts to access Outlook's address book or tries to send e-mail via Outlook, users will receive a warning and will be urged not to allow it.

Microsoft added options for corporate users, allowing them to choose which attachments users on their networks can access. Adding the extra capabilities delayed introduction of the patch for more than two weeks.

The software patch for Microsoft Outlook 98 and Office 2000 was available on a company Web site on Thursday.

The "ILOVEYOU" virus clogged e-mail systems around the world and infected millions of computers, destroying graphics files stored on many machines. It only worked against users of Microsoft Outlook and caused as much as \$10 billion in damage, mostly in lost work time.

Adobe Ships Illustrator 9.0

Adobe Systems announced on Friday that it is shipping Illustrator 9.0, the latest version of its vector-graphics software. The upgrade adds object transparency, graphic styles and a host of features for Web designers, including a live Pixel Preview mode that lets you see how pages look when

rendered on screen.

Illustrator's new transparency features work with objects, groups or layers; you can apply Photoshop-style blending modes along with the transparency, and you can apply different transparency settings to characters, words or paragraphs. You can also convert objects into transparency masks, similar to Photoshop's Alpha channels. For example, if you use a gradient-filled object as a mask, the underlying image shows through in white areas of the object but gradually disappears as the gradient darkens.

Also borrowing a page from Photoshop, a new Live Effects feature lets you apply Photoshop filters--including third-party plug-ins--to objects or layers. The underlying object or layer remains editable, and any effects can be removed or modified. A new Graphic Styles feature lets you define a combination of effects and attributes that can be applied as a single style. Modifying the style automatically causes all styled objects to be changed accordingly.

Although many of the added features will appeal to print designers, Illustrator 9.0 makes its strongest pitch for the Web. For example, the new Pixel Preview lets you work in a simulated 72-dpi display environment. Objects snap to a 72-dpi grid, and as you zoom in, you can see jagged edges. The Save for Web window, borrowed from ImageReady, lets you compare a bitmapped copy of the image with up to three other versions so you can see the effects of different compression settings.

Illustrator 9.0 now lets you choose from a CMYK or RGB workflow. If you specify a CMYK color in the RGB workflow, the color is rendered in RGB, and vice-versa. You can also specify a Web-safe RGB workflow in which the Color palette displays only Web-safe colors.

This is also the first version of Illustrator to support Macromedia's Flash format. You can export objects as Flash files, or export layers as frames in a Flash animation. Illustrator 9.0 also exports Scalable Vector Graphics format, an emerging Web standard.

The software is available in the U.S. and Canada for an estimated street price (ESP) of \$399. Current Illustrator users can upgrade for an ESP of \$149. Users of Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, PageMaker and competing products such as Macromedia FreeHand can buy the software for an ESP of \$249.

Adobe also offers Illustrator as part of its Adobe Collections software suites: the \$999 Adobe Web Collection, which also includes LiveMotion, GoLive, and Photoshop; the \$1,599 Adobe Design Collection, which also includes InDesign, Photoshop, and Adobe Acrobat; the \$999 Adobe Publishing Collection, which also includes PageMaker Plus, Photoshop, and Acrobat; and the Adobe Dynamic Media Collection, which also includes After Effects, Premiere and Photoshop. The latter is available in a \$1,499 standard version and \$2,149 production bundle. You can buy the software through Adobe's online store or from authorized resellers.

HP Rolls Out New Entry-level Inkjet

Hewlett-Packard has introduced what it's describing as any easy-to-use inkjet printer for students, families, and first-time printer buyers. The HP DeskJet 648C, which starts shipping today, has a price tag of US \$119.

The new, cross platform DeskJet -- which sports both USB and parallel ports -- prints at up to 6 pages per minute (ppm) for black text and up to 3 ppm for color, according to HP. It offers a dual print cartridge system, meaning you can print in either black & white or color without swapping cartridges (which, by the way, are \$27 for b&w and \$29 for color ones). An optional, \$33 photo cartridge can be purchased for photo-quality output.

The printer comes with HP ColorSmart III, which automatically selects the optimal color or grayscale tone for smoother skin tones and solid backgrounds, sharper images, and vivid color palettes, according to HP. The SmartFocus feature of the ColorSmart technology purportedly sharpens details in low-resolution images printed from the Internet by automatically synthesizing a higher-resolution image. There are also options for handout and poster printing.

The printer comes with Attune software by Aveo, a free, Web-based help service that provides plain-English messages concerning common printer problems. For instance, according to HP, if you receive an error message when attempting to print a document, Attune automatically recognizes the error and presents a message called an Intelligram. All Intelligrams offer easy, step-by-step instructions for troubleshooting or problem prevention.

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